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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

June 22, 1999

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Mr. Belford Lawson
Federal Communications Commission
Portals Building
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 2055

Re: *In the Matter of Overcoming Obstacles to Telephone Service for Indians on Reservations,*
DA 99-1010, BO Docket No. 99-11

Dear Mr. Lawson:

I am writing this letter in response to the Commission's request for comments regarding how to overcome obstacles to telephone service for Indians on Reservations, BO Docket No. 99-11. The Commission extended the deadline for filing such comments until June 28, 1999 via Public Notice released May 27, 1999.

I have spent most of the past five years in the telecommunications industry: first with a long distance carrier, second in the internet service provider space, and currently with a data networking equipment vendor. During this time I have tried to stay current with regulations and legislation that affect this industry.

It is my understanding that the 1996 Telecom Reform Act requires equal access to the copper loop (last mile) only in RBOC territories. Rural Local Exchange Carriers were granted an exemption to this access mandate, as they maintain that equal access to their copper loop could undermine their ability to remain competitive and profitable.

If an "exemption to the exemption" were to be created with respect to companies providing telecommunications and related services to Indian reservations, new or competitive service providers would have access to the last mile. These new providers would be able to offer new services (xDSL, etc.) to these communities, enabled by access to the copper loop. This "exemption to the exemption" would eliminate a major obstacle in the effort to provide broadband access to rural communities. Without this change in current regulations, these communities will continue to be denied the technological advancements in voice communications, commerce, distance learning, and information access which are readily available in the rest of the country.

Thank you for your consideration of this document.

Sincerely,

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